

Attenshun, you 'orrible little men Don't call me Sarn't —call me Linda!

EXCLUSIVE

By Ron Mount

ONCE he was the terror of the parade grounds. When tall, burly Regimental Sergeant-Major Leonard Brown barked an order, raw recruits the other side of the barrack square nearly jumped out of their size nine boots.

But time has passed and things have changed. Those same recruits should see their much-feared RSM now.

The manly chest, once the pride of every parade, is now a curvaceous bosom. The mirror-like boots are now high-heeled pumps.

The immaculate Sam Browne belt has been replaced by a bra and girdle. And the rasping voice that once spread terror is now a gentle contralto.

For in one of the most bizarre sex-changes ever, RSM Brown has become a woman.

Unique

He is now known officially—even by the Army pension authorities—as Miss Linda Broderick.

Two days ago the former RSM was involved in a unique court case.

He had applied to magistrates at Southend, Essex, for variation of an order to pay maintenance to his 55-year-old wife, Mrs Freda Brown.

He was named on the summons and the court list as Miss Linda Broderick, the name he has adopted by deed poll, and addressed in a letter from the Deputy Clerk to the Justices as "Dear Madam."

But when the case was called he was absent—and his application was dismissed.

Twenty minutes later he arrived in his tiny 600cc Honda car wearing a blue two-piece suit, blue flowered blouse, white high-heeled shoes and matching handbag.

Officials told him the result of the case as Mrs Brown hurried from the court with her solicitor without speaking to "Miss Linda."

Later, at his tiny two-room flat in Chiswick Park, London, the ex-RSM told me his strange story.

Dilemma

"I've always felt more like a woman than a man," said Linda. "From the age of 10 I realised I wasn't like other boys."

"Doctors have since told me I was born with the mind and emotions of a woman but the body of a man."

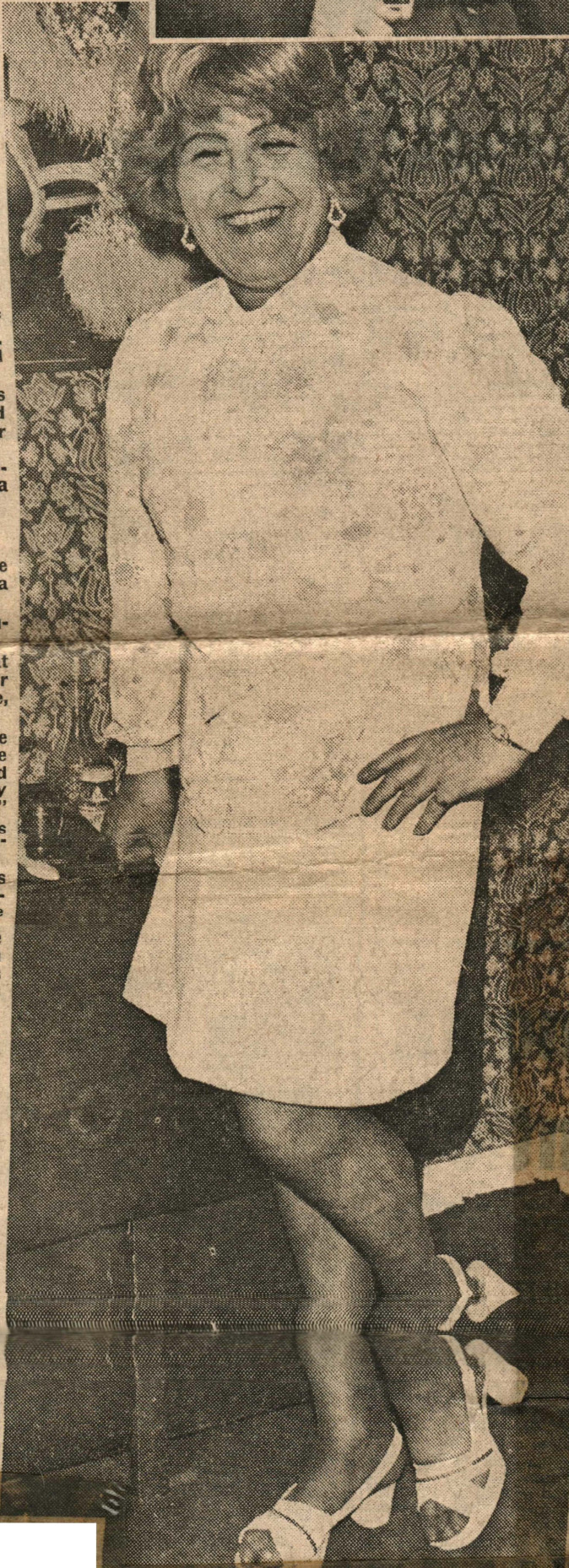
"It was a terrible dilemma, but my father, who was very strict and straight-laced in a Victorian way, left me in no doubt that I must live as a male."

He was a young soldier when he was placed in a Victorian way, left me in no doubt that I must live as a male.

Linda, who is now a young-looking 62, saw pre-war service in India and China.

The young soldier escaped from Dunkirk and later held some of the most feared

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Leonard Brown in uniform (top) as a sergeant-major . . . and as he is today, officially know as Miss Linda Broderick

RSM known as 'Auntie'

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positions in the Service—sergeant at several "glass-houses" (Army prisons).

He served 40 years with the Army.

"And throughout the whole of that time, knowing that I was not quite like the other men, I had to fight harder than everyone else to try to assert my masculinity," Linda said.

"It worked. No one ever suspected my secret. Looking back now I think my sheer aggressiveness got me to the rank of Warrant Officer First Class, the Army's highest non-commissioned rank."

The former RSM and his wife were married in 1938. They have two daughters, aged 34 and 22, and four grandchildren. The couple have been estranged since 1962.

"Oddly enough, my married life was more or less normal," Linda went on. "Though I sometimes had difficulty making love."

WARDROBE

After retiring with an Army pension in 1965, the ex-RSM spent some years doing various men's jobs.

He was a bus driver, ambulance man, fireman, security guard and warehouse manager.

"All that time, in fact all my life, I felt I would be happier living as a woman," Linda said. "Finally, in July, 1972, I had the guts to do it."

The ex-soldier bought himself a new wardrobe. Then he walked in the street for the first time wearing a frock and all the other female attire.

"It was a great moment for me," said Linda. "I felt liberated and have never been happier in my life. I would rather commit suicide than change back again."

"My wife and I had been separated for years and she has our home near Southend."

"I moved into a flat and took my first job as a woman—a petrol pump attendant."

"They were so pleased

with me they wanted to put me in for some title or other like Miss Petrol Pump Attendant for the year, but I thought that was going a bit far.

"I'm now receiving a course of hormone treatment from a specialist under the National Health Service."

"Soon I'm to have an operation to raise my voice a tone or two and eventually I may have special surgery."

"All my documents now show me as Miss Linda Grosjean. I even managed to persuade the Army to change my pension book."

UNFAIR

"I'm bitterly late for the court case. I got held up in a traffic jam."

"I find it difficult living as a woman alone and think it unfair that I should have to pay maintenance to another woman."

"I'm so short of money that I'm doing two jobs to try to make ends meet."

"I get up at 4.30 every morning and work as a cleaner for several hours before starting my regular job as a telephone operator and typist."

In the tiny cul-de-sac where Linda lives, she is known by all the neighbourhood children as Auntie Linda.

FRIENDLY

And anybody calling at her bright red-painted door with the one word, Linda, under the bell, is sure of a friendly welcome.

She is also a great favourite at the local, the Duke of Sussex, where she is a familiar figure with her silver-grey wig and fashionable women's clothes.

"I've never been happier—and after all, it's my life I'm leading, not somebody else's."

"I know some people are sympathetic, probably because they would hate to be in my position."

"But it's not sympathy I want, just understanding."